

Human Brotherhood

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London - - - -
STUDENT VOLUNTEER
MISSIONARY UNION -
93, Chancery Lane, W.C.

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My title, "Human Brotherhood," points to a task—that of loving everyone. Ordinary life throws us together into all sorts of relationships. Brotherhood is attained when everyone concerned loves everyone else as himself. We ought to discuss the question of what we mean by one man loving another, but it would take too long to do so. But we may at least point out that love is not the same as liking. To like others is largely a matter of feeling and temperament. Love adds will and reason to feeling. Love means, at the least, a willingness to give to another. The minimum that one man can give to another is the recognition that he is a human being. So we may say that a minimum—only a minimum—of brotherhood would be attained when each man was willing to give to every other man the respect due to a fellow human being. The essence of the task is that we have to love anyone and everyone. We can all love a few; we all do. We have all got our natural attractions and repulsions. There are few people who are not drawn into some set or some circle of friends. But how are we to love everyone? How love just the person who repels us, or whom we repel? How get over another's refusal or inability to understand us? How love one of another race or colour? How love a rival in a competition, or someone who has done us an injury?

The task is infinitely hard. Let us be realistic about it.

We shall see that Brotherhood is a hard task if we look to see how we get on with it in college. I do not suppose that sets, cliques, divisions, jealousies, ostracisms, likes and dislikes, flourish anywhere more vigorously than they do in schools and universities. Think of your schools. Did their members love one another? I look back and remember the hatred between us of the Leeds Grammar School and our contemporaries of Leeds Higher Grade School. I notice, too, a

certain electricity in the air in the camp of the Officers' Training Corps Junior Division, where detachments of all sorts of schools are congregated. Some of the corps do not seem very fond of one another. Think, too, of the inside of schools. Does Brotherhood reign between day-boys and boarders, between big boys and small boys, between boys and masters? Universities and colleges are, I think, worse. They are often a mosaic of sets. The amount of money they have, the games they play, the examinations they read for, the schools they come from—separate men from each other; and so there spring up the rowing set, or the medicals, the theologicals, the "pi"-men, the horsey men, and the bloods.

Alongside of such division into sets, and because of it, there flourishes the habit of hard judgment upon individuals. You know what I mean. You know how easily "N" or "M" is voted to be beyond the limits of toleration. Quite small and superficial features are made the ground of savage condemnations. I remember once during a missionary campaign appealing to some Oxford men for a kindlier attitude on their part to fellow undergraduates. I hazarded the belief that when at Oxford we were in the way of condemning men out of hand in accordance with the way in which they parted their hair. Afterwards one of the party came up to me and said, "That is precisely what I have often done." The truth is, that if we want to look at things as they are, we must admit that colleges are often unkindly places where many individuals spend lonely and rather bitter days.

Now, we are met here at this Conference to consider missionary and social questions. Let us remember that the reality which those general terms denote is a mass of human relationships—of man with man of different race, of man with man of different class. The question I ask, therefore, is this:—Can *we* throw stones at the world outside the colleges because of its lack of Brotherhood? I think not. Rather we must confess that the temper acquired in college days reappears too often in the world at large. If Indian students are cold-shouldered in college, how will their kinsmen be handled by administrators later on? If public-school men despise board-school men, how will they—how do they—get on when brought together in a city office? If there are outsiders in a college, there are outcasts in society. If the well-to-do are abominated when they are students,

will they be appreciated when they are employers? If college hates college, may not country hate country?

I think that such questions, if frankly asked, will lead us to the conclusion that we students are no better than anyone else in the way of Brotherhood. We can see that we are not outside of the social evils that lie before us, but we are ourselves part of them. We may talk of the social and racial problems as if from a distance, but all the while *we* are the social and racial problem.

Now, if all this is true, what are we to do? Well, first, be sorry. There is no relief like the knowing and acknowledging that one is an ass. It is also the only way of beginning to do better. Let us get rid of any complacency about Brotherhood.

Secondly, do not let us imagine that we are going to make a great change of ourselves and by our own effort. Brotherhood is a very tough job. It is a bond which many of the conditions of life are bound to strain to the utmost.

For, in the first place, life is a race of inevitable rivalry: in it everyone cannot win. If one man excels somebody else must be excelled. Somebody has got to be at the top of the form, all cannot be all together at the bottom. In a word, Brotherhood has often to subsist between winners and losers. That is hard.

Again, people are different, and they ought to keep themselves different. There is no virtue in a Scotsman not being a Scotsman. We welcome you who come here as delegates from other countries, for what you are. We want you to be what you are, and we in turn will be as English as we can be. There is nothing so dull as cosmopolitanism. Hence it is impossible to abolish, or to desire the abolition of, individuality, or nationalism, or patriotism, or civic pride or regimental feeling, or *esprit de corps*, or local sentiment. Yet by themselves these limited forms of Brotherhood make universal Brotherhood the more difficult.

Nor, again, can tastes and preference be got rid of. A man who has no preferences has little or no character. To be the same to everyone, is to be nothing to anyone. For some such reasons, nothing is more destructive of Brotherhood than the frantic attempts of some people to be brotherly. We are all familiar with the universally hearty man: he is genial to all, and a friend to none.

Lastly, Brotherhood is hard because life is a struggle of

good with bad and of right with wrong. We dare not decline the battle. We have got to take sides. We have got to have enemies. Brotherhood means loving your enemy whilst maintaining a moral antagonism towards him. That is hard to do.

For these and many reasons we see that Brotherhood is hard to come by. We shall not attain to it by worrying over it. Indeed the more we fuss over our love for others, the more self-conscious we shall grow, and that is ruinous to love. Is that the conclusion of the whole matter? Must we simply make the best of a bad job?

No, there is one great saving expedient: it is to come to God. The primary thing in our contact with others is to think not of what they are to us, but of what they are to God. In other words, we must approach others through God. We must bring faith into human relationships. Now, faith is faith because it holds on at times when things are contrary to it. It walks in the darkness. Again and again we meet people who are too much for our brotherliness—for whom we cannot see that anything is to be said. In the darkness of such relationship, we may believe that though the other is repulsive to us, yet he is precious to God. Who is it of whom I speak? Perhaps it is a mere don; or an utter prig; or someone so horsey as scarcely to be human; or an opponent in politics; or the embodiment of all that we are averse to in religion; or someone physically repulsive to us—someone tainted or marred by life's squalor: and so on—whoever it is, we may believe that he is the brother for whom Christ died. We may not love him, but we may yet remember that God does: that he is the object of the love which will not be satisfied with any number less than all: which seeks until it finds even the last.

To treat others as precious to God is the secret of Brotherhood. It carries us beyond the entanglements of our own sentiments, or the limited circle of our tastes. It gives us faith in everyone, even though everyone is not congenial to us. To this faith we can hold, even though circumstances deprive us of every reason of feeling brotherly to another. The barrier that separates us from others does not separate (for none can) from the love of God in Jesus Christ, and as it were going round by God—we have a bond of Brotherhood with the others.

And moreover, to treat others as precious to God, is to

discover that some of the qualities, the differences and distinctions which are hindrances to our liking others, are good things and are included in the wealth of the love of God, Who made all the variety of man. Thus, if all individuals are dear to Him, we shall not only develop our own individuality, but believe in that of others. And as to national and racial differences, we shall learn to appreciate them—though we may feel antagonistic to them—as parts of the humanity that is made one in Jesus Christ. We shall indeed walk, that is advance, by faith; we shall be brought through the darkness to the sight of what before we were blind to. We shall pass from the poverty and parochialism of our hearts into the catholicity of God's love.

You will find, I think, as this Conference goes on, that we need above all things faith in God. At its outset we see that we need faith in God in order to have faith in man—in every man. To whom shall we go for that faith? After all, how do we know that God loves each and all? How do we know, do we know, that each one of the little children dying in the dens in great towns is dear to God: that He seeks each one with love that will not be stayed? To whom shall we go?

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THERE are moments of silence which are far more eloquent than those times in which human thought pours itself out in the highest flights of language. At the beginning of this meeting we passed through such a moment of silent eloquence, and there arose to God a cloud of aspiration, the aspiration of the human heart toward the best. It went to Him as a cloud of incense rises to heaven, and God received that aspiration, and in response He is going to give inspiration. Our aspiration in many instances perhaps knew not to what heights it was rising. All that could be seen was a vague best, and the divine in us rose toward that best with a cry something like this :—

“ Our best is mean nor stands Thy test,
Still it must be our very best.”

Among others, more disciplined, who have learned by experience something of the life of faith, there was that majesty of self-donation which was, as it were, the flame of the human will striking upward toward God and sheathing itself in His Will.

Ah, you and I are to-day of all men who have ever lived, the most privileged, and we have to learn that privilege reaches its consummation only when it is translated into terms of responsibility, responsibility laid upon us from on high by the Most Loving and the Most Holy. The privilege which you and I enjoy is not a luxury for self-indulgence, but a force for social use, and while we rejoice in our privilege, and aspire to God, let us remember that it is not in mere terms of humanity that we can learn the meaning of life, but only by working out the filial relation with God.

I dare not speak of Human Brotherhood without speaking first of Divine Sonship. There is no meaning to the word

“fraternal” until we have learned the meaning of “filial.” There is no meaning to brotherhood until we have been taught the meaning of fatherhood and of sonship. If I said nothing else to you but this one thing, and were able to say it in terms which would go home to your inmost being, that you are the sons of God, I would have done a great thing, because a man who has once learned that he is the son of God must forthwith accept all of his race as his brethren.

Look at the one spotless figure that stands in the midst of history. Look at the Lord Christ and see how He began His work of public ministry. He identified Himself with the human race and its weakness, but He saw that it was only in His Divine Sonship that He could fulfil a life of service, and at His Baptism, before He went among men to preach, and to teach about the Kingdom of God, He rose to the supreme consciousness of that Sonship. He heard His Father say: “Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Men and women, let me say to you, that you will lack the sense of vocation, that you will be without that sustained enthusiasm and that unquenchable passion which is necessary if you are to live the life of true men and women on this earth, unless you too are able to look up into the face of the Most Loving and the Most Holy, and to see in that face a Father’s countenance and to hear within your souls His words, “Thou art My beloved *son*, in whom I am well pleased.” The filial relation must precede the fraternal, and as it has been well said by the previous speaker, this is to be worked out in the life of faith. God does not expect you to use any more faith than you have got, but He does expect you to use what you have. It may be but a tiny spark, yet that spark must glow heavenward, Godward, in the filial relation. Upon that we base the fraternal.

Our fellowship with God is the most treasured thing which life holds, and it has in its keeping the richest and the most joyous, as well as the most powerful, elements of experience. Moreover, it is a privilege common to all. Do not listen to that voice which says some men are gifted with the religious sense which is withheld from others! There is no man who wears the human form who is not essentially in his being religious, and therefore has capacity for fellowship with God; if he has but a pure heart he can see God—dimly, it may be, yet he can see Him. Let us build, then, the fraternal, this human brotherhood of which we talk,

upon the filial, upon our sonship in Christ, and let us consider, briefly of course it must be, two things relative to human brotherhood which, let me say, is also divine. Human brotherhood has ceased to be merely human since the Lord Jesus Christ walked as the Son of Man among the sons of men. He has lifted up the human, so that now it has a divine capacity and a divine quality. Let us consider, first, the depth of brotherhood, and then, the breadth of brotherhood.

We have looked at the shallowness of some of our human relationships. We have hated them in our hearts, and we have put on that stable repugnance toward the past which is the essence of penitence. Now let us turn away from that and look at the possibilities that lie before us. Let us think of the depth of human brotherhood, because human relationships as worked out under the Divine Spirit become ineffably deep. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." There is the depth of human brotherhood, and it is something that must apply to life here and now. It is not some transcendental feature of brotherhood which existed in former days, but which can be discarded at this moment. There was no period in history when men who were ready to lay down their lives for their brethren were more needed; but let me tell you that no one can lay down his life, no one can die for his fellows, until he has learned first to live for them and frequently it is much harder to live than it would be to die. Sometimes it is harder to face the dull heavy problems of everyday life than it would be to allow one's soul to go out in one ecstasy of pain with the full knowledge that beyond lay God and peace. What is needed to-day, men and brethren, is men who will live for their fellows, and by that I mean who will give every inch of their time and every particle of their being for the welfare of mankind, the common weal. Everybody needs a supreme passion in life. A man cannot have purity unless he is passionate. A man cannot have power unless he is enthusiastic, and one of the first things needed in our schools and colleges is a living interest in some of the real problems of life. "Ah," you say, "you mean some of those great problems into which we shall go when we have finished our education." I mean nothing of the sort. I mean problems that lie at your hand, the problems that are within the compass of your college gates, the problems of which you yourselves are a part, the problems of which the previous

speaker has already spoken, and a man must give himself to these problems, I say, enthusiastically. In a book that I have just been reading, a most depressing book, and yet alas! a book that tells of life as it is to-day—I refer to *The Old Wives' Tale*, by Arnold Bennett—there is a picture of a small man who was living a small life. A relative of his committed a crime. This small man became a great man by espousing the cause of the criminal, and the novelist says he became a hero because he espoused a cause, he failed, and he died of it. Be sincere and real about your problems—the problems of brotherhood, that is my counsel to you. Then you will give depth to your fellowship.

There are two particular barriers to brotherhood. One of them is so obvious that it is hardly necessary to speak of it, because it is the contradiction of brotherhood. I mean selfishness, and by selfishness I mean going just a little bit off that perfect balance of the golden rule. A man who does not do as he would be done by, a man who does not love his neighbour *as* himself is selfish. In other words, he is using some part of society for his own individual advantage without regard to what the effect is upon society itself. He makes himself, in other words, a centre around which he swings his fellows. Of course there are degrees of egotism, and I recognize that motives are mixed, but at the same time I maintain that selfishness, the departure from that simple direct law, is at the root of all our conflicts and troubles. Egotism may rise to such a height as to put the egotist almost, in his own estimation, in the place of God. Again a phrase from a modern novel comes to my mind, where he, who afterwards became a hero when he forgot himself and began to love his neighbour as himself, was told by her who afterwards became his bride, that “his cosmos was all ego.” He himself was the centre of life and everything whirled around him. Now, if you get an enthusiasm to which you will give yourself completely, an enthusiasm which has as its chief motive power the benefit of personality, then you will begin a life of deep brotherhood, and you will never put the possession of mere physical comfort or the retention of mere physical life above those things that are grander than life itself. You will never say, “I have got to live at all costs. It may be that the necessity which is laid upon me of maintaining my position in life, will require that I should trample upon the tastes and the interests, or even the needs

of other people." You will never say, "At all costs a man must live."

"A man must live! We justify
Low shift and trick to treason high,
A little vote for a little gold,
To a little senate bought and sold
By this self-evident reply.

"A man must live! Pray tell me why
Life at such cost you have to buy?
In what religion were you told
A man must live?"

"There is a time when a man must die—
Imagine for a battle cry
For soldiers with the flag unrolled,
For soldiers with a sword to hold,
This coward's whine, this liar's lie,
A man must live!"

Another thing that I think is most detrimental to human brotherhood is what is commonly called *dignity*. We must preserve our dignity—our dignity as individuals, our dignity as a nation. Let me read you the words of one who was an administrator in Egypt and who now holds high office in another empire: "We are morbidly afraid, especially as young men, of appearing undignified. Ah, that terrible word dignity! What follies are committed in its name! How many pleasures we deny ourselves for fear of it. How often we do violence to our best feelings lest it should suffer. Dignity puffs us up and makes us unkind to our inferiors and subordinates. Dignity makes us forget our common humanity. Dignity makes us think the world of dropping an "h." It makes us spend more than we can afford in cabs, though in our hearts we would be just as happy on foot. . . . It is all false, this dignity. The true is present, unknown to the owner. It is an unconscious emanation of the mind, a visible sign of spiritual qualities. True dignity comes not for the asking, but rather flies from him who seeks it. It comes naturally or not at all. He who acts with the object of appearing dignified may be sure that he achieves nothing, but the painful, distorted image of dignity, and the effort is visible to all except him who strives. Dignity lies not in an action, but in the motive which underlies it. Honesty, incorruptibility, straightforwardness, kindness, gentleness, consideration for the feeling of the

humblest, all that we can gain by the study of Christ and the lives of the great—therein lies dignity. Let no one, therefore, strive to achieve dignity itself. It is a vain quest. But let him achieve the virtues which bring dignity in their train."

I need not add a single word regarding the struggle for individual dignity. False dignity is too common a thing in schools and colleges to need further comment. But let me add a word about the dignity of the nation that sometimes expresses itself in false patriotism. We are even now trying to push out of our way the horrors of war, and yet in the midst of cries of peace there are rumours of war. Consider the false dignity of the nation that fails to recognize the brotherhood of nations. Let me say that it is for you in your speech regarding your country to check the haughty cries of false patriotism, and to give to the brotherhood of nations rightful respect. It is fitting at this moment, and in this presence to repeat what was said not long since by a British statesman, that if war does come it will not be because of the pressure of inevitable, irresistible law, but because of the lack of wisdom and the sinfulness of man, and you, you are the nation; in your hands is peace for the nations, at any rate in motive. Remember it and live your responsibility.

We turn from the consideration of the depth of human brotherhood to the consideration of its breadth. A depth without breadth becomes exclusiveness, but by beginning our fraternal life deeply we gain capacity for universal friendship. In other words the scope of brotherhood is mankind. "God has made of one blood all nations of men on the face of the whole earth." That which at an earlier era of the world's history was largely a matter of theory now in these days of rapid transit and international action, is a commonplace of experience. We are constantly brought into touch with those who belong to the uttermost parts of the earth, men of different type and tongue and colour and race from ourselves. In each of these we must see a brother. As a great scientist has said, "There is only one species of man. The variations are numerous. They do not go deep." Unhappily through the distorted ideas that have been current for a century, we of the West have learned to look on men of the East as though we and they were divided by a gulf almost impassable. I grant you that considered purely on this animal and human side brotherhood is impossible. It is only

when the Divine comes in to rescue and transform the human that we see the consummation of God's purpose for mankind. It is of the utmost importance that we who are launching out on a career should, at the very beginning, recognize that we owe obligation to every man with whom we come into contact, and although in our intercourse with peoples of the Far East we shall find many differences, let us remember that all the differences are incidental, and all the likenesses fundamental. Moreover, similarities exceed dissimilarities. It was well brought out by the last speaker that as our attitude is to our neighbour near at hand, so will it be to every representative of humanity. For instance, if we are given to that critical temper of mind which finds difficulty in fellowship with those who are not like-minded, then when it comes to our time to go abroad in missionary work, or, say, to the Civil Service in India, an impassable barrier will rise to defeat our highest purposes. How often we hear such a sentence as this in our college halls, "He is a first-rate fellow, but a bit queer." What we are really thinking about is his queerness and not his good qualities. As a matter of fact, probably many men have said just the same thing about us with truth. We think that queer which is unfamiliar, and if we school ourselves to see what is queer in the lives of our immediate companions, much more shall we have the full view of human nature shut off from us when we are called upon to deal with men of distant climes and different race.

Again, those who lack considerateness at home are going to be equally inconsiderate abroad. Not long since a man of great renown visited the Far East. He was met with singular attention and courtesy. It was made known that he was a great collector of a certain artistic product and he was presented by the nation whose guest he was with some rather rare specimens. He met this courtesy by asking for still further contributions from the treasure house in which he stood. His request was denied. In all probability it was thoughtlessness, but little does he dream that among the cultured people of the nation in question there arose a storm of indignation at his discourtesy. This seems to be a trifle, but it is an illustration of how the inconsiderate life will be doubly inconsiderate when inferior and backward races are concerned.

I have referred to the exclusive spirit which takes shape in a variety of forms in home life. It creates that intolerable

spirit of snobbishness which is a contradiction of brotherhood and is wholly contemptible. Man has been made with such a wealth of affection and such a capacity for service, that the only proper setting in which he can live out his life is the entire human family. It may be that Providence will require that he should fulfil his vocation in circumscribed conditions, but in this our day, be his conditions as circumscribed as they may, opportunity will be afforded him to link his life with a variety of types and conditions. To desire to belong to an exclusive set is to cramp the soul. Appeal for and aim at a wealth of friendships; hate snobbishness as you would hate a venomous serpent. I speak of this particular vice because it is so painfully common. Human nature even in its primitive conditions falls an easy prey to it. Just a year ago I was on a lonely island, remote from the influences of what is called civilization. The natives were living in the most primitive manner, the little children, for the most part, wearing a single garment quite sufficient for the purposes of protection from climate and for modesty. One of our party in engaging a group of boys in conversation, paid some attention to a little lad who was clad in the manner I have described. Another boy, who had had superior advantages, and was clothed as boys of our own race are clad, pushed forward and said to my friend, "He is a bad boy, don't speak to him, he doesn't wear trousers." You can smile at this if you will, but it finds its precise counterpart in the snobbishness that defiles our schools and our universities. The one thing to do with an exclusive set is to break down its barriers, or else leave it. I am advocating no mere passion or ecstasy of altruism when I say aim to have your friendships broad. I am asking you to enrich your lives as they can be enriched by no other process. God has two great gifts to bestow on mankind. One is friendship with Himself, and the other springing out of the first is friendship with every child of His, and we look forward to the day when all nations and peoples and tongues will be gathered together before the great White Throne, retaining their racial and local characteristics, and yet bound together in the beauty of Divine family life. When that day dawns, then the individual will find himself by losing himself in the completeness of redeemed humanity. I am going back to my original thought. In Jesus Christ is the hope of the world and an intelligent understanding of brotherhood. If you

get to know Him, then you will know human nature, not in its limitations and weaknesses, but in its capacity and in its power. I know it is possible that some of you now are troubled by intellectual doubt because you do not know exactly what place Jesus Christ holds in the economy of mankind. Let me tell you that even if you do not know it all, you know this at least, that He is the central Figure of history. You can turn to Him with more readiness than to anyone else, and it is to personality that you must go and not to theory. Turn to Him with all the belief you have in Him, and then He will lead you to the truth, and the truth will make you free.

“ If Jesus Christ be a man
 And only man, I say
 That of all mankind I cleave to Him
 And to Him will I cleave alway.
 If Jesus Christ be God
 And the only God, I swear
 That I'll follow Him through hell or heaven,
 The earth, the sea, or the air.”

